District Review Report

School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

February 9 to 11, 2004

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Sherri Mohoruk, Assistant Superintendent, School District No. 36 (Surrey)

104-06646/

District Review Report

2003/2004

District Name: Okanagan Skaha

District Number: 67

Superintendent: Gary Doi

Date of Visit: February 9 - 11

Team Chair: Sherri Mohoruk, Assistant Superintendent SD 36 (Surrey)

Team Members: Britta Gundersen-Bryden, Manager, Assessment, Ministry of Education
Kathleen King, First Nation District Principal, SD 85 (North Island)
Glenda McMurray, Teacher, SD 75 (Mission)
Monica Pamer, Assistant Superintendent, SD 38 (Richmond)
Lynn Robertson, Director of Instruction, SD 36 (Surrey)
Sharyl Samodien, Parent, SD 75 (Mission)

Context

School District 67 (Okanagan Skaha) comprises 7,482 students in 19 schools in the communities of Penticton, Summerland, Naramata and Kaleden. The district's enrolment is declining slightly each year. The senior population (65+) in the community is almost double the provincial average. There are 135 status on reserve and 315 off reserve Aboriginal students in the district. A full day Aboriginal Kindergarten program has been in operation at West Bench Elementary for three years.

School District 67 offers a range of educational choices, programs, services and facilities and a variety of learning opportunities for students. The district infrastructure for technology is highly developed and is centered around a fibre optic network. The ratio of computers to students is approximately 3 to 1.

Positive relationships exist among partner groups. The district makes a concerted effort to involve partner groups in discussions about student achievement. The district is committed to its mission statement of "Working Together for Student Success".

The School District completed its reconfiguration to a K-5 elementary, Grade 6-8 middle school and Grade 9-12 secondary school system. A new secondary school opened in November 2002 and a junior secondary was converted to a middle school in September 2003. Its K-7 associate schools were converted to a K-5 configuration at that time.

The district is committed to three goal areas (Literacy, Numeracy and Social Responsibility) for 2002-2005.

District Review Report

2003/2004

Summary of Process

Review Team Activities:

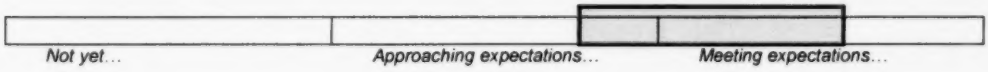
- Representatives from the district provided a comprehensive overview of the district context, the improvement plan and community engagement at a formal meeting on Monday morning.
- The team visited all 12 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 3 secondary schools and the Home Learners program.
- Team members met with principals, vice principals, teachers, parents and representatives from School Planning Councils, support staff, and students during the school visits.
- Two team members met with representatives from the District Parent Advisory Council.
- One team member met with representatives of the District Aboriginal Advisory Council.

Additional data considered:

- District progress report (which includes the accountability contract) and school progress reports.
- Press releases, financial information and the preliminary 2003/2004 budget review.

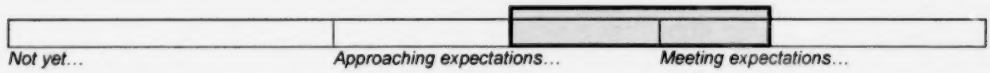
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*
   Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



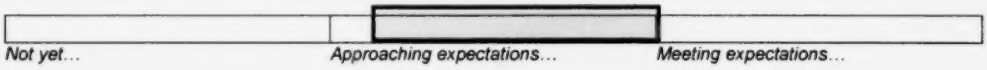
- The district has established three goals for three years (2002 - 2005).
- District goals are focused on improving student achievement.
- District and school goals are aligned.
- Some schools have focused objectives to meet the needs of specific groups of students.

2. *Rationale:*
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, **based on evidence**, for the selection of their student achievem ent goals.



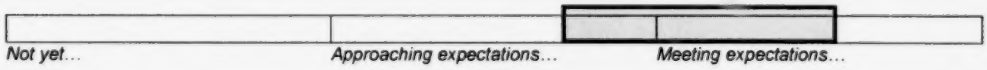
- The district and schools are working to li nk data with their goals.
- The district considered a variety of data sources to select their goals.

3. *Data:*
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sour ces of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. T he analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



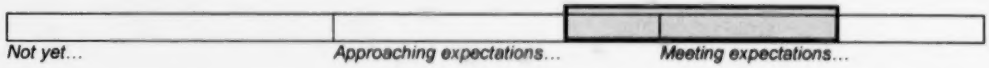
- Schools are considering a variety of data sources as they discuss improving student achievement.
- The district is currently researching early and late literacy as sessment tools and is in the process of refining their common numeracy assessments (grades 3, 5 and 8).
- Some schools are using performance standards to gather baseline data.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts and schools have well-organized, focused im provement plans in place. T he strategies selected to achieve the goal s are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovati ve thinking.



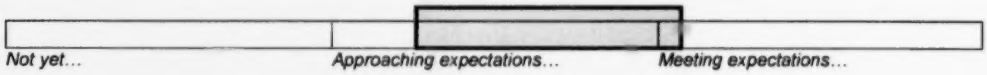
- Schools are using strategies and interventions that are linked to their goals.
- Numerous strategies are being used to im prove literacy (reading).
- Common strategies are in place to identify and support at-risk learners.
- Schools are tracking student per formance from elementary to middle to secondary.
- The district provides professional learning opportunities that support school and distr ict goals.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organizations – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



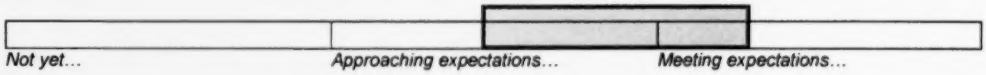
- District work groups are well established in each of the goal areas; teams and networks exist in all schools.
- District resources are differentiated to support student achievement – e.g. district helping teachers, early and late literacy staffing, teacher release time for collaborative planning.
- The Teachers' Association has focused professional development on improving student achievement.
- The district, teachers, principals, and vice principals have jointly planned and organized professional development initiatives.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts and schools get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



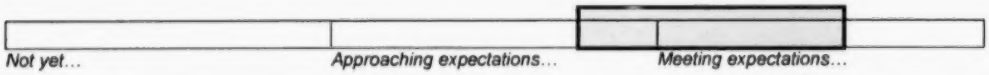
- The district and schools are in the process of selecting appropriate baseline data and will soon be in a position to set performance targets.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



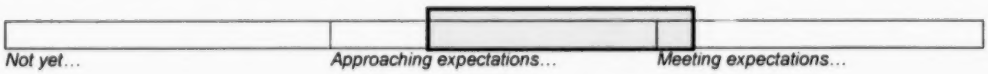
- The district uses a variety of media to communicate with partner groups, families and community including local media, multi-media presentations, newsletters, e-mail and district and school web sites.
- Student achievement is highlighted in district and school communications.
- The district should continue to strengthen two-way communication.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence:*
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



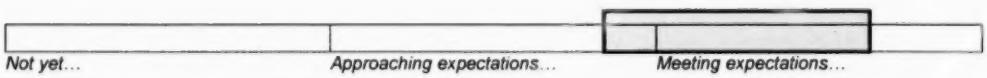
- There is a high level of awareness of district goals.
- The district work groups (Reading, Numeracy and Social Responsibility) promote collaborative practice and coherence between schools and the district.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement*:
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- School Planning Councils are beginning to understand their roles.
- Parents feel welcome and say district and school staff are approachable.
- Many parents are involved in a wide range of school initiatives.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*
Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment, to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- The district builds leadership capacity at the district and school levels.
- Leadership is being developed through the work groups that are focused on student achievement.

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement.

- Positive relationships exist among partner groups.
- Schools are committed to becoming collaborative learning communities.
- The district created structures and strategies to support the district accountability contract and school plans.
- Teams and networks foster collaboration and sharing of best practices.
- Effective Behavior Support (EBS) is well established in many elementary and middle schools.
- School identity and uniqueness is honored while maintaining district coherence.
- Trustees are visible in the schools and are involved in the district work groups.

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- Transition planning which includes the tracking and analysis of student achievement to support student success in a new setting;
- The One-to-One Reading program involving parents, seniors and other community members;
- Senior Greeter Program at one middle and one secondary school;
- Families and Schools Together (FAST), a program for at-risk students and their families;
- 'Hands On Science', a locally developed project-based course in middle schools;
- Use of electronic tools to communicate day to day student progress and assignments to parents (e.g. teacher school websites, voice messaging and Integrade Pro).

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results:

- Use baseline data to set targets for 2004-2005.
- Support School Planning Councils (SPC) in their efforts to analyze data and make informed decisions (e.g. networking and further training).
- Encourage further use of the BC Performance Standards as a classroom assessment tool.
- Involve partner groups in refining the format for presenting the accountability contract and school plans to ensure clarity and understanding.

Priorities (Optional)

Team identification of areas needing immediate attention: N/A